

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI RAMESH-WAR THAKUR): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) It is at a preliminary stage of discussion and no commitments have yet been made.

(c) and (d). Yes, Sir.

(e) Decision will be taken at the annual aid India Consortium meetings of 1992 & 1993.

Indo-French Cooperation in Defence Field

2977. SHRI R. SURENDER REDDY:
SHRI RABI RAY:
SHRI SANAT KUMAR MANDAL:

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether India and France have agreed in principle to cooperate each other in defence field;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) by what time a final decision in this regard is likely to be taken?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI S. KRISHNA KUMAR): (a) to (c). Cooperation in the Defence field between India and France has been continuing for the past several years. It is Not in the national interest to furnish the details thereof.

Seizure of Gold at Bombay International Airport

2978. SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether gold bars worth crores of rupees were seized by the Customs authorities from a cargo consignment at Bombay International airport in January, 1992;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the quantity and value of gold seized; and

(c) the details of persons prosecuted in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI RAMESH-WAR THAKUR): (a) to (c). On 13/01/1992, the officers of Sahar Airport Customs, Bombay, acting on information intercepted one circular wheel like iron structure weighing 575 kgs. which has arrived from Sharjah by Gulf Air and was described as forged carbon blind steel flange in the Airway Bill for delivery to a party in Bangalore. Preliminary inquiries indicate that the import was under a fictitious name and address and have not thrown any light about the persons involved. The steel flange was cut and this resulted in recovery and seizure of 1832 gold bars weighing 213.72 kgs. approximately and valued at Rs. 10.58 crores approximately.

Assistance to Small and Medium Newspapers

2979. SHRIGEORGE FERNANDES:
SHRI BAPU HARI CHAURE:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Reserve Bank of India has issued guidelines to Scheduled Commercial Banks to the effect that advances made to small and medium Newspapers may be treated as priority sector advances;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether facilities provided to the small-scale industries are also proposed to be extended to small and medium newspapers; and